

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07

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P R 300014Z APR 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

USCINCEUR

USCINCUSNAVEUR

S E C R E T STATE 104054

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EG, TS, LY

SUBJECT: FAHMY'S CALL RE US HELP TO TUNISIA

REF: CAIRO 5435;(NOTAL) TUNIS 2899; TRIPOLI 0582

1. AS EMBASSY CAIRO IS AWARE, EMBASSY TUNIS AND DEPARTMENT ARE IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH GOT REGARDING TUNISIAN CONCERNS OVER LIBYA. FOLLOWING VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER'S RECENT VISIT TO TUNIS, WHICH WAS CLEAR INDICATION OF US SUPPORT, USS WOOD VISITED TUNISIA, AND IS CURRENTLY CONDUCTING JOINT EXERCISES/MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS WITH TUNISIAN DESTROYER "PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA." OTHER VISITS ARE PLANNED. IN ADDITION WE ARE ARRANGING TO SHIP ON URGENT BASIS A WIDE RANGE OF TANK PARTS UNDER RESIDUAL MAP PROGRAM,

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AT REQUEST OF GOT. WE ARE ALSO CURRENTLY DISCUSSING FY-75

AND FY-76 FMS CREDIT SALES WITH GOT, AND GENERALLY TRYING TO BE AS HELPFUL AS POSSIBLE.

2. ONE OF MAIN PROBLEMS, HOWEVER, IS MAGNITUDE OF TUNISIAN DEFENSE NEEDS AS PERCEIVED BY GOT, AND SCARCITY OF RESOURCES AVAILABLE. UNDER PRESENT CONDITIONS, USG IS NOT IN POSITION TO FILL THIS GAP BY ITSELF, AND WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE A DISSERVICE TO ALLOW GOT TO BELIEVE OTHERWISE. FOR THIS REASON, WE ARE URGING TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT TO LOOK AS WELL TO OTHER FRIENDS FOR DESIRED FINANCIAL AND/OR MILITARY AID, ESPECIALLY THE MODERATE ARAB OIL PRODUCERS WITH WHOM GOT ENJOYS CLOSE RELATIONS. WE DO NOT KNOW HOW ACTIVELY GOT HAS PRESSED THESE ALTERNATIVE SOURCES, BUT EVEN IF FUNDS WERE IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE, REQUIRED CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL FOR COMMERCIAL SALES AND LONG DELIVERY LEAD TIMES MAKE IT UNLIKELY GOT PERCEIVED DEFENSE NEEDS COULD BE QUICKLY MET BY US.

3. TUNISIA IS TO RECEIVE 15 MILLION DOLLARS IN FMS FINANCING THIS FISCAL YEAR AND WE PLAN TO CONTINUE TO INCLUDE TUNISIA IN OUR ANNUAL REQUESTS TO CONGRESS FOR FMS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE. GOT HAS EXPRESSED INTEREST IN INCREASING THE LEVEL OF FMS FINANCING TO ALLOW FINANCING FOR HAWK AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM, BUT SUMS INVOLVED WOULD BE BEYOND BOTH GOT AND USG CAPABILITIES. WE CONTINUE TO BE SYMPATHETIC TO TUNISIA'S DEFENSE NEEDS, HOWEVER, AND HAVE DISCUSSED ALTERNATIVE DEFENSE ITEMS. REVIEW OF VARIOUS OTHER GOT REQUESTS IS CURRENTLY UNDERWAY.

4. EMBASSY IS AUTHORIZED TO DRAW ON ABOVE IN RESPONDING TO FOREIGN MINISTER FAHMY'S SOLICITATIONS. YOU MAY ALSO INDICATE THAT DEPARTMENT IS AWARE OF MORAL AND DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT WHICH EGYPT IS GIVING TUNISIA, AND THAT WE FULLY SUPPORT THESE EFFORTS. US WILL MAKE EFFORTS TO BE QUIETLY HELPFUL TO TUNISIA, WITHIN LIMITS OF OUR CAPABILITIES; BUT WE BELIEVE BEST INTEREST OF BOTH EGYPT AND TUNISIA, AND OF OTHER MODERATE ARAB GOVERNMENTS, WOULD NOT BE SERVED BY MORE ACTIVE OR PUBLIC US INTERVENTION IN TUNISIA'S DISPUTE WITH LIBYA. WHILE WE SHARE CONCERN OVER LIBYAN UNPREDICTABILITY, WE DO NOT BELIEVE
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THAT LIBYA IS EITHER CAPABLE OF OR PLANNING TO MOUNT DIRECT MILITARY ATTACK AGAINST TUNISIA (SEE REFTELS FROM TUNIS AND TRIPOLI). WE BELIEVE RATHER THAT LIBYAN POLICY TOWARD TUNISIA IS ONE OF INTIMIDATION AND SUBVERSION, AND THAT THESE TACTICS CAN BEST BE COUNTERED BY TUNISIA'S MAINTAINING CONFIDENT PUBLIC POSTURE AND TAKING MEASURES TO ENHANCE LOCAL SECURITY AGAINST POSSIBLE FOREIGN INFILTRATORS OR LIBYAN-SUPPORTED TUNISIAN DISSIDENT

ELEMENTS. WE HAVE REVIEWED THESE OBSERVATIONS WITH
FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTI AND WITH OTHER GOT OFFICIALS AND
WILL CONTINUE TO CONSULT CLOSELY WITH THEM. SISCO

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